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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
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-----078150 021932Z /41

O R 021838Z OCT 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7744
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
() Release (X) Excise () Deny
Exemption(s): B1

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM AR
SUBJ: JOURNALIST REAPPEARS

Declassify: (X) In Part () In Full
(X) Classify as C () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date 5/9/01 Declassify on 5/9/11 Reason 25X6

1. ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, ENRIQUE ESTABAN, PROVINCIAL CORRESPONDENT FOR CLARIN, REAPPEARED 69 DAYS AFTER HIS ABDUCTION IN NEUQUEN BY NINE MEN. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, ESTEBAN WAS SUBSEQUENTLY PLACED AT THE DISPOSITION OF THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS IN NEUQUEN FOR QUESTIONING REGARDING HIS DISAPPEARANCE.

2. EMBASSY SOURCES AND INFORMATION FROM ESTABAN'S WIFE, WHO WAS ABDUCTED FOR FIVE HOURS AND QUESTIONED WITH HER HUSBAND, INDICATE THAT THE ESTABAN ABDUCTION WAS PART OF AN ANTI-SUBVERSIVE OPERATION DIRECTED AGAINST LEFTISTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LA PLATA. ESTABAN WAS REPORTEDLY A LEFTIST STUDENT LEADER AT THE UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM.

3. THE FIFTH CORPS COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT ESTABAN WAS FOUND GAGGED AND TIED IN A RENAULT CAR ON A MAJOR HIGHWAY NEAR TRES ARROYOS AS A RESULT OF AN ANONYMOUS PHONE MESSAGE. HOWEVER, THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD REPORTED THAT BEFORE THE POLICE ARRIVED AT

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THE CAR, ESTEBAN HAD ACTUALLY FREED HIMSELF AND WALKED TO A NEARBY GAS STATION TO INQUIRE ABOUT

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HIS WHEREABOUTS.

4. THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED SEVERAL REPORTS RELATED TO THE LA PLATA UNIVERSITY OPERATION FROM FAMILY [REDACTED] SOURCES. A FRIEND OF ESTEBAN'S, ROBERTO OMAR RAMIREZ WHO IS AN ARCHITECTURE PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY WAS ABDUCTED TWO DAYS BEFORE ESTEBAN AND IS STILL MISSING. TWO FORMER UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS, A DEAN AND A SCIENCE PROFESSOR, WHO ARE PRESENTLY PEN PRISONERS AT LA PLATA PRISON WERE RECENTLY QUESTIONED (WITHIN THE LAST MONTH) UNDER "HOSTILE INTERROGATION" PROCEDURES ABOUT LEFTIST FACULTY MEMBERS AND STUDENTS. (WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY THE FAMILY OF THE SCIENCE PROFESSOR THAT THE "PICANA" WAS USED ON HIM, AND BY THE OTHER FAMILY THAT THE FORMER DEAN WAS BEATEN.) THESE REPORTS ARE SO FAR WITHOUT CONFIRMATION. THIS SATURDAY'S BUENOS AIRES HERALD REPORTED THAT HABEAS CORPUS WRITS HAD BEEN FILED REGARDING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF TWO LA PLATA UNIVERSITY CHEMICAL ENGINEERING STUDENTS (LUIS ALBERTO ROCHE AND NOEMI PANIGUA) ON SEPTEMBER 26.

5. COMMENT. THE ESTEBAN RELEASE IS GOOD NEWS. THE ARGENTINE PRESS ASSOCIATION (ADEPA), MININT HARGUINDEGUY AND ARMY CINC VIOLA HAVE ALL EXPRESSED SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE CASE. WHAT ENCOURAGES US ESPECIALLY ABOUT THE ESTEBAN RELEASE IS THE EVIDENCE IT OFFERS OF VIOLA'S WILLINGNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN INTERVENING DIRECTLY IN AN INDIVIDUAL CASE AND PLUCKING OUT A "SUSPECT" FROM THE SECURITY ELEMENTS' MACHINERY. IF THE INTERVEN-

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TION SIGNALS BETTER CONTROL OVER THE LA PLATA UNIVERSITY INVESTIGATIONS, WHICH HAVE A LONG HISTORY AND WHICH BY MANY REPORTS HAVE PRODUCED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, ALL THE BETTER. END COMMENT.
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